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Goal orientation, attention styles and anxiety of junior golfers in Malaysia

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Abstract

Sports psychology plays a vital role in contributing to the performance of an athlete. This research examined the levels of goal orientation, attention styles and anxiety towards the performance of the Junior Golfers in Malaysia. Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaires (TEOSQ) was administered to measure goal orientation aspects, Task and Ego. Modified Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Styles (TAIS) was administered to measure six attention styles that were categorized into effective and non-effective attentions. Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) was administered to measure anxiety aspects which are cognitive, somatic and confidence levels. The three questionnaires were administered on 80 junior golfers who participated in the 2002 national junior golf circuit. Purposive sampling was employed for this study. Descriptive analysis showed the junior Golfers were more orientated by Task (mean = 4:07, SD = .56) rather than Ego (mean = 3:42, SD =. 56). NAR attention style had the highest mean score (3.40 SD = .51), which was at high moderate level, followed by BIT attention style (mean = 3.16, SD = .64) at moderate level. OET attention style had the lowest mean score (mean = 2.90, SD = .60), which was at moderately low level. For anxiety, the level of cognitive aspect was moderate at a mean score of 3.13 (SD =. 97) and the level of confidence aspect was high moderate at 3.37 (SD =. 69) . Somatic aspect had a mean score of 2.72 (SD =. 96) which was at low moderate level. The findings of this study has implications to education policy, sports trainers and athletes. It is recommended that future studies examine a larger sample of Golfers from different levels or different types of sport. Qualitative research should be conducted in addition to quantitative research to get a deeper understanding of the athletes' thoughts during competition. A comparative study between psychological profiles of Malaysian athletes and other more successful international athletes is also recommended.

1. Introduction

Golf sport is increasingly popular with the Malaysian society today. Golf is not only a sport competition, but also important in developing social relationship, health and economy. Estimation of active golfers in Malaysia until the year 2002 is more than 450.000 people. It is a sport that is often recommended by corporations for business purposes and generating funds for charitable projects in the country. In addition, golf is a sport that could attract tourists to come to this country. In addition, Malaysia has more than 203 golf courses as well as suitable weather that allow golf to be played almost throughout the year.

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Mental aspect is an integral part that exists in a competitive athlete. An athlete should maintain an appropriate level of mental health to enable him to perform at optimal level in line with the existing potential (Anshel 1997). To achieve these goals, psychological factors such as goal orientation, concentration and anxiety must be well controlled to produce the best performance. When the competition becomes more intense, greater mental resilience is required because motor skills gaps among athletes today are getting smaller. Success and failure in sports, especially golf is often associated with motivation, attention and **arousal** (Wann 1997). Thus, the mental preparation for athletes before and during the competition is very important.

Anxiety factor has been associated with the failure of an athlete in a sport venture. Martens et al. (1990) defined anxiety in a competition atmosphere as the feeling of being nervous, doubtful and pressured related to the athlete's individual perception on the faced situation. According to Carver and Scheier (1990), the ability and confidence of individuals to control anxiety depends on past experience. Thus, young athletes should be given the experience and exposure in the tournament before competing in a higher level. The young athletes who **lack exposure** would be easily frustrated, lose confidence, self-control and distance themselves from competition in the future if the failure of match left a deep psychological impact.

Goal orientation may also be a determining factor to the success of athletes in a sport competition. This statement was supported by Maehr and Nicholls (1980) which stated that the perception of success and failure will affect the goals of a person who has a different culture. Diverse environment according to the culture of a nation, will affect the types of goals to be achieved in the competition.

Attention is a cognitive process which is the mental effort or concentration. Six attention according to Nideffer (1995b) are as follows:

a. Broad external attentional focus (BET): High scores reflect individuals who can integrate a lot of stimulation in one.
b. Broad internal attentional focus (BIT): High scores indicate an individual who can integrate a lot of ideas and information from various dimensions.
c. Narrow attentional focus (NAR): High scores reflect the ability of athletes to concentrate on a strong focus when needed.
d. Overloaded by external stimuli (OET): The higher the scores, the higher the potential of the athlete in making mistakes because of confusion with the external stimulus.
e. Overloaded by internal stimuli (OIT): The higher the scores, the more mistakes are made because of confusion with thinking of too much information.
f. Reduced attentional focus (RED): High scores reflect the mistakes of the athlete that fails to change the external focus to internal focus, or vice versa.

Self-confidence is closely linked with self-concept and self-image. Confident athletes believe they can do something successfully (Vealy 1986, Weinberg & Gould 1999). Even self-confidence can affect performance in sports events as it relates to the underlying positive emotions, increased concentration, the ability to curb anxiety and mental disorders. Self-confidence can help control muscle tension by doing a good technique when playing the sport (Hardy 1990, Weinberg and Gould 1999). Self-confidence can be very important in achieving success. This is because the acquisition of skills and achievements of an athlete in sport depends on the level of confidence.

2. Objective of the Study

One of the objectives of the study was to investigate the level of goal orientation (OMP), attention style (GP) and the level of anxiety (TK) of young golfers in Malaysia.

3. Research Design

For this study, 80 young golfers, comprising 62 male and 18 female players became the respondents. The sample was a purposive sample in which they were a selected group. They are young golfers in the age group of 16 to 18 years and are national youth golfers who have been chosen to participate in golf tournament sponsored by the National Youth Circuit, National Sports Council, Sportexel and Milo. The researcher used three instruments, namely

the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionaire (TEOSQ) (Duda and Nicholls 1992), Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style (TAIS) (Nideffer 1981) which had been modified and the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory (CSAI-2) (Martens et al. 1990a).

For the pilot study, the researcher obtained 35 samples. They consisted of athletes in the school district between the ages of 15 to 17 years (males and females). The questionnaires were completed, coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12 for the purpose of testing the validity and reliability of the instrument. Cronbach alpha for all constructs of CSAI-2 were between 0.79 to 0.9. They all exceeded the validity of 0.60 and could be used as recommended by Mohd Majid (1990) and Sekaran (1992). Cronbach alpha for the two constructs in TEOSQ instrument were 0.83 and 0.57. Cronbach alpha for six constructs in TAIS instrument were between .59 to .74. This means that the reliability of this instrument was high. Descriptive analysis was used to measure the mean and standard deviation of goal orientation, attention style and anxiety.

4. Findings of the Study

4.1 Profile of Goal Orientation of Junior Golfer

Goal orientation has two sub-dimensions namely Task Orientation and Ego Orientation. Table 1 showed that the mean score of Task Orientation was 4:07 (SP =. 56), which was at high level, while the mean score of Ego Orientation was 3.42 (SP =. 58) or at average level. Junior golfers are more task oriented, which mean they focus more on the acquisition of skills and techniques in the golf sport.

Table 1. Distribution of Mean, Standard Deviation and Goal Orientation Level

Goal Orientation	Mean	SD	Level
Assignment(Task)	4.07	.56	High
Ego	3.42	.58	Moderate

SD – Standard Deviation

4.2 Profile of Attention Style of Junior Golfers

Attention Style is divided into two styles: effective attention style (GPB) and the ineffective attention style (GPKB). There are three styles of effective attention styles: NAR, BET and BIT, while ineffective attention style are RED, OET and OIT. The distribution of mean score of attention style are summarized in Table 2. The highest mean score was 3.40 (SD = .51) of NAR attention style, followed by BIT attention style (mean = 3.16, SD = .64).The lowest mean score was 2.90 (SD = .60) of OET attention style.

Table 2. Distribution of Mean, Standard Deviation and Attentional Styles Levels

Attentional Styles		Mean	SD	Level
Effective	NAR	3.40	.51	High Moderate
	BET	3.05	.58	Moderate
	BIT	3.16	.64	Moderate
Not effective	RED	2.95	.48	Low moderate
	OET	2.90	.60	Low moderate
	OIT	2.95	.60	Low moderate

Key:

BET - Broad external attentional focus
BIT -Broad internal attentional focus
NAR- Narrow attentional focus
OET - Overloaded by external stimuli
OIT - Overloaded by internal stimuli

RED - Reduced attentional focus

4.3 Profile of Anxiety of Junior Golfers

Anxiety are divided into three sub-dimensions, namely(a)Cognitive, (b)Somatic, and(c) Confidence. Table 3 showed the distribution of the mean, standard deviation and level of anxiety for young golfers.

Table 3. Distribution of Mean, Standard Deviation and level of Anxiety Level

Anxiety	Mean	SD	Level
Cognitive	3.13	.97	Moderate
Somatic	2.72	.96	Low moderate
Confidence	3.37	.69	High moderate

SD – Standard Deviation

Table 3 showed that confidence anxiety had the highest mean of 3:37 (SD =. 69) at high moderate level. Cognitive anxiety had a mean of 3.13 (SP =. 96) which was at moderate level and Somatic anxiety had the lowest mean (2.72, SD =. 96) which was at low moderate level.

5. Discussion and Implication

With respect to goal orientation, the level of Task Orientation was at high level while the level of Ego Orientation was moderate. This means that young players are less oriented to win the match, but instead focus on the acquisition of skills and techniques in the game. Thus, the young players are aware of the need to improve especially in the acquisition of skills in golf stroke. This is because there is a variety of punches and fine motor skills) to be mastered in order to apply them well while playing. This is a good indication for a brighter future in the sport of golf as a high motivation to acquire skills will produce more highly capable golfers. Based on the theoretical perspective of goal orientation by Nicholls (1989), task-oriented athletes are more resilient and able to practice the highest level of motivation to continue to participate in sports because their skills are good.

The findings showed that the effective attention style and ineffective attention style of young players were at a moderate level. This means that young golfers still need to increase the effective attention style while reducing ineffective attention style in order to give appropriate attention in every competition. Anxiety was divided into three sub-dimension: Cognitive, Somatic anxiety and Confidence. Cognitive anxiety level was at moderate level, while Somatic anxiety was at low moderate and Confidence level was at high moderate level. This means that, overall golfers are assured of their ability to win the match and less having physical or Somatic anxiety. The study also showed that young golfers are sure to get good performance in the competition, but they still experience Cognitive and Somatic anxiety at the moderate level.

This study provides implications for the Sport Education policy, coaches and sport officers, and athletes. The implications for education are as follows:

i. Parties involved in sports development should complement the knowledge of sports psychology in order to develop a method for learning sport more systematically and effectively.
ii. Setting realistic goals will result in success and not frustration or withdrawal from the sport.
iii. Understanding athletes more deeply is necessary for designing more effective training program.
iv. Educators and policy makers should try to improve the golf sport in Malaysia by giving more students and athletes the opportunity to involve in golf sport by providing appropriate programs and training.

Implications for sport coaches and officers are:

i. More serious attention about the need to equip themselves with deep knowledge in psychology to help athletes improve performance.
ii. Monitor athlete's perception of his performances as it might affect the level of anxiety before the competition.
iii. Understanding athletes more deeply to help design more effective training program, especially in the aspect of mental training.

iv. Anxiety over situation of competition is not necessarily negative. Instructors can use the energy of anxiety by turning it to the better performance of athletes.

Implications for athletes are:

i. Athletes must have an appropriate goal setting and personal rewards as a good strategy to increase the motivation to succeed in sport.
ii. Athletes should have put the acquisition of skills as the primary goal of their participation in sports and is also consistent with the universal aspirations of athletes (Duda 1989).
iii. Athletes should be trained with proper techniques and strategies to control Cognitive and Somatic anxiety separately because the effect of both aspects vary according to situation and environment as well as the skills that will be used.
iv. Athletes need the skill of effective cognitive restructuring. This skill allows the athlete to change negative attitudes to positive one or hinder the negative emotion from spreading in their thinking.
v. Athletes should be given the imagery skill or mental rehearsal so that the mental preparation before the competition becomes stronger and improve high self-confidence.
vi. Various relaxation exercises such as Progressive Relaxation and breathing techniques can be performed by the athlete to control the level of anxiety

6. Conclusion and recommendation

The effectiveness of a sport program does not only require a result-oriented program but also the athletes' perception and evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions made by coaches and sports psychologists. This is because every athlete has a unique distinction in connection with performance issues in competition. Perception of ability and success of the athletes themselves are important because it involves the commitment of the athletes on training, participation in mental health education and is continuously involved in the program despite the absence of a coach and a psychologist

. Integrated principles of biomechanics, physiology and nervous system in coordinating the movement need the involvement of psychological factor. To improve the psychological aspect of the movement of athletes, mental training is the most effective manner. There are many ways to train the mental skills of athletes, but the two major approaches are Cognitive and Somatic approaches. Cognitive methods include mental rehearsal, imagery, Visio-motor behaviour rehearsal and cognitive behaviour therapy. While somatic approaches include biological feedback, meditation and progressive muscle relaxation.

This study suggests that future study should continue to examine other factors that may affect cognitive aspect of athletes. Thus, qualitative studies should be conducted in addition to quantitative methods to ensure a deep understanding of athlete's thought during competition. It is suggested that future research can be performed on bigger samples of all levels and abilities from primary through to professional level. Experimental studies also can be conducted to look at the effectiveness of intervention programs and athlete training. Comparative study between local amateur and profesional golfers or between countries is also important to assess the mental and psychological strength of athletes at international level.

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